

RANDOM NOTES
by
Bruce F. Ruggles

This article is not intended as a sermon, but as a helpful guide to those of us in radio—that is the hobby of collecting "radio's golden age" on tape. I have been in radio, in almost all capacities, since 1950 and I would like to give some helpful hints on the fine-art of preserving those we hold dear...Jack Benny, Fred Allen and all the rest. We as a "club" even though we have no membership badges and we are scattered throughout a dozen countries, must immediately take steps to weed out the "unfortunates" and help those who desire quality and not just quantity in obtaining radio shows. Here are hints, as I see them, which I hope will be of benefit to you—whether a newcomer to the hobby or a collector for many years. (editor's comments will be in ()).

CARE AND QUALITY OF TAPES: Always use 1200 ft tapes on 7-inch reels. Even though due to a space shortage 1800 or 2400 ft reels work best, in the long run they don't. The thinner the tape, the more likely it is to stretch. After many dubbings this causes drop-outs and loss of quality, not only in your master but in every dub you send out.

Half-track; yes. Quarter-track; no. This can be argued pro and con for hours. One of the problems is cross-talk on $\frac{1}{4}$ tracks due to limited spacing between tracks. If storage is a problem, get out of the hobby and take up stamp collecting. Any tape, even the best of quality, will in time "ripple" at the outer edges, which means programs recorded on tracks 1 and 4 are almost lost.

Most tapes have a poor oxide coating, wrinkles and other problems at the very beginning and end of the tape. Since an extra 2 or 3 minutes is allowed on any new tape, it is best to start recording 1 minute into the tape. And for your friend's sake, put a leader on both ends of your tape to prevent them breaking off, resulting in shows starting a few seconds or minutes into the program.

Watch the humidity factor where you store your tapes. Basements and attics are out. Also, not in direct sunlight. Check your humidity reading occasionally.

Use a fair-quality tape..in fairness to yourself and others. Scotch or Philips is excellent if you can afford it. Remember, your collection is only as good as the tape you put it on. Take time to redub if someone sends you a cheaper brand. He should not complain if you return the same tape to him on the next trade or swap. (Since most collectors expect a new reel of tape, perhaps you should indicate that you are using his reel, erased; ed.)

CARE OF TAPE MACHINES: Oddly enough, the machine that does the job is probably the last thing the collector thinks about. If a machine is giving you any trouble, cease activities and have it fixed before one more dub is made. Most collectors would rather wait and get better quality.

Fade-ins and bang-ins ^{are} and "no-nos." Either pre-set your level by means of a test before making each dub, or get an automatic level volume machine that will give you perfect levels without "twisting the dials."

If you do 15-hours worth of taping a week then every 9 months you should have these points checked by a professional serviceman.

1. Worn and loose drive belts should be replaced.
2. The machine should be oiled: one drop on the end of a screw-driver - no more or you're in trouble with a gummy crap, hence slow running speed.
3. Have patch cords checked for broken wires. Make sure solder joints are secure and there is no grounding.

ZOUNDS! WHAT SOUNDS!

Our LIGHTS OUT classic this month kiddies is about a man planning a surprise party for his wife. It started out quite innocently and what was intended as a joke became a living horror. He arrived home well ahead of her and decided to hide behind a Japanese screen. She presently arrives at home and you can hear a clicking of ladies' heels as she comes in the door. There was a pause and then you hear her going into the next room and closing the door. Again this was all done with sound and you had the feeling she was disrobing by the sound of her coat coming off. Suddenly the receiver is lifted and she begins to dial. She whispers, "Madge. There's someone in this room--He's hiding behind the screen--What am I going to do?--I don't know. It can't be George. George is out of town. No it's somebody hiding behind the screen--Oh God, what good would it do to call the police. It will take them at least 20 minutes to get here. He's going to kill me. What am I going to do?" She hangs up. A drawer then opens. She then calls Madge again. "Madge, do you remember that sword my brother, Charles, brought home from the war? That Japanese sword? I'm going to have to do something. It's the only thing I've got--O.K. Look, you can call the police, for God's sake, quikk." She walks across the room (It was toward the end of the show and the suspense had been built up beautifully). And then--whoooooshhh! The sound of a sword cutting through the air, going whoooooshhhh--kech-h-h-hah! Did it cut. You could hear the sound of something cutting. My God. She split his head open. What a sound. It just went wuch-h-h-h. And then she gasps "Uh-h-h-h..." When she saw what she had done and who it was. In the distance you can hear the sound of sirens arriving.

That was the end of the show, another of Arch Oboler's fantastic sounds. Care to hear how they did that one? Well, a real sword was actually used. They then obtained a large head of cabbage and inserted two nails, one on each side. Then strong cords were tied on them and the cabbage was suspended from the ceiling. At the moment of decision, the microphone picked up that chilling sound of the sword going through the air and it cut the cabbage, going wuch-h-h-h-h. Do you realize that sound is exactly the same sound as a skull being split in two? Hoo boy. You know, you can do many things with sound. Sounds are always far more frightening than sight. This was the horrific beauty of Golden radio. I think many a monster movie became completely loused up the moment the monster became apparent.

Another famous classic was about a bio-chemist working alone in his basement lab on a mysterious algae, but that's another story and I'll tell that one next month.

Sal Trapani

MORE NEWS AND TIDBITS: FADES: I still can't get rid of the fades and unfortunately some addresses weren't clear. Here are a few repeated: Jack Thompson, RR1 Hwy 2 East, Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Dan Visco, 32 Cresthill Rd, Brighton, Mass 02135....Herb Wells, 2108 Forest St, Des Moines, Iowa 50311. I hope in the future I will be able to afford a self-inking mimeograph machine. This gets awfully messy and I don't like to send out a newsletter you can't read too well.

BRUCE RUGGLES, looking for a copy of Barry Brooks or Dave Goldin's catalog. Anyone have a copy they can part with (Box 3000, North Bay, Ontario, Canada)...WARREN SANFORD, 3475 Erie Blvd. E. Box 53, Syracuse, NY 13214....What follows is the beginning of an informative article of hints to traders by Bruce Ruggles. He would welcome your comments and will continue to add to it. Send comments directly to Bruce.

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5 7

4. Replace the playback/record head(s) of your machine. This is a "must" for continued top quality.

5. Replace the rubber capstan "which gives you the correct speed" and the pressure pads that go against the heads.

Use correct jack outlets and inlets. When dubbing, you can't feed one tape machine into the "microphone" jack of the second. Use proper input and output jacks or you'll get tapes that sound like they are Mike or telephone recorded.

Make sure you are using proper jacks for both machines, especially if they aren't the same make. Often a jack for a Sony is not adaptable to a Philips because of the make-up of the machines.

Remember if your tape machines are not fully-transistorized, you must check tubes often. When they go on a radio or TV set, usually the set just stops working. Faulty tubes in tape machines cause noise and distortion yet the machine still appears to function normally.

Have the speed of your machines checked regularly with a stroboscope. How many programs do you know that are circulating simply because some neophyte didn't check the speeds of his tape machines.

Avoid moving machines. Leave them set up in a permanent place. make your own workshop. Move the wife out of the kitchen, if necessary. Moving your recorders around loosens tubes and tends to put heads out of azimuth adjustment.

Do not clean the heads with lighter-fluid, carbon tetrachloride, etc. These will erode the protective finish on the heads. Obtain a proper headcleaner, soft cotton swabs, and clean them every ten to 15 hours of taping. Make sure also that your tape does not scrape on the bottom or the top edge of the feed-up or take-up reel.

DUBBING FROM TRANSCRIPTIONS: You can't dub a transcription or AFR3 disc on your home record player. These discs were designed to be played at radio stations, using their turntables, stylus and filtering techniques. ~~I would be happy to make proper dubs and return both tape and discs to those who do possess these. I work in a radio-TV station.~~

Most pre-1950 ET's were designed for a 78 RPM-size needle stylus. An LP needle will not do the job. Correct filtering can only be done at a station. Get friendly with a DJ there. He'll do it for you. (You might discover some ET's at the station in the process. ed.)

To repeat...if you want perfect tracking, full sound, noiseless dubs at the proper speed, let the station do the job. Building your own 16-inch turntable to do the job is ridiculous.

OTHER HELPFUL SUGGESTION3: Ride levels carefully when dubbing. No fair double-speeding or taking a bath. Listen to the output of the machine that is making the dub. This way, you can best judge the quality you are sending out. I've heard a certain Sherlock Holmes episode recently more than 30 times, and frankly I'm tired of it. But I know that the copy I sent out in every case, was just as good as the copy I received. ~~(Which come to think of it was no hell in the first place, really. Again, a transcription that someone attempted to dub at home.~~

If a tape has a splice in it or you are forced to make one make a good one. And not with Scotch tape or a bit of Bond-O. And overlap the ends of the tape by a sixteenth of an inch. Remember, after a few years the tape will pull apart a little, but by that time, if the splice has been ever-so-slightly overlapped, the ends will butt.

Include everything on your dub, right down to the NBC chimes and spots or promos that follow. Don't be in such a hurry to get to the next program. (and if your tape runs out, splice on some more. Don't cut the program short. ed.)

Include a card with each tape sent out, giving title of program, DATE, and code-number or page number of your own catalog.

Continued next month

MORE NEWS: CORTLANDT PARENT JR., Oropound Rd, RFD 1, Peekskill, NY 10566. Cort has a varied listing and a well organized list. He is especially interested in FRED ALLEN and BABY SNOOKS and FRANK MORGAN. Cort has about 45 FRED ALLEN....MIKE RYAN, 185 Elder A, Millbrae, Cal 94030....DEATH: Manfred Lee, Ellery Queen creator, died Sat, April 3rd in Roxbury, Conn. Frederic Dannay, co-author, says the Ellery Queen stories will continue. The 35th novel, coming out this month, is entitled A Fine and Private Place....Dan VISCO is interested in DATE WITH JUDY, STEVE ALLEN SHOW, OUR MISS BROOKS, HOLLYWOOD STAR PLAYHOUSE. He is especially looking for a program called "Enchantment" with D Niven and Teresa Wright (32 Cresthill Rd, Brighton, Mass 02135)....According to Dr. John Braxton, psychiatrist, in the April 25th issue of the National Enquirer, nostalgia damages a nation by turning people into emotional cripples and creating a "do-nothing" climate. Although he says there's nothing wrong with collecting as a hobby-it can be very relaxing therapy-it's foolish to think you can turn back the clock. Braxton says that the 2 million people in America who make nostalgia a way of life just want to live in the past. Nostalgia is a form of withdrawal. (Is that what we are-dropouts from the present? mental patients?)....CHUCK SCHADEN'S radio program has been renewed another year. 2 years ago he had one beat up old tape recorder. Now Chuck has 6, including 4 new Ampex, a transcription turntable on order, and is having an addition built on his house to hold all the "junk" Has anyone else's life changed as drastically....BOB ERSCHEN, 313 Bryant St, Dubuque, Ia 52001. Bob has a variety of programs. He would like ELLERY QUEEN'S MINUTE MYSTERIES....A HELPING HAND; 8/14/41 is only the first half....MEL SHLANK apologizes for not continuing his article on tape. His work has been exceptionally time consuming. It will be continued in the May issue. He appreciates the many letters that you sent and will answer all of you shortly. For those of you not receiving last month's newsletter, Mel is selling blank tape of various brands at very low prices, even lower than those mentioned in last month's article. He will send you a price list if you write to him (553 Howelton Rd, Orange, Conn 06477)....More and more FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY of 1939, 1940, are being transcribed from disc to tape. Unfortunately some programs have skips and repeats....several JACK BENNY are beginning to make the rounds, all recently dubbed from disc. They include 1/2/49-1/23/49 and 10/1/44--one has the Colemans and one has Fred Allen....I am listening to one of the Fibber McGees now and it also appears to be fast. The NBC chime is a half tone high. PLEASE be careful in the initial dubbing and CHECK the speed of your recorders.....

WELL....keep the cards and letters coming in. Let me know of news, meetings, wants, new material, etc. I am still looking for SUSPENSE dates and also material about ESCAPE including correct dates.

NEXT MONTH: More on tape by Mel Shlank, more about children's programs by Evan MacBride, more about dubbing by Bruce Ruggles, thoughts about phone-in talk programs about early radio by Jack Miller, another story by Sal Trapani, and more.

So...

Write if you get work
Hang by your thumbs

Jay H. Hickerson

Jay Hickerson, 6 Koczak Ct, North Haven, Conn 06473 (203) 239-5251

write up in his local paper. He received a special award by the San Diego County Teachers Association. Like myself he teaches sixth grade. Don Rasette of Hadley, New York is Chairman of the Stereo Recording Enthusiast Tape Club. Bill Hennessey works with the division of adult corrections in St. Louis County. Roger Hill teaches and is presently working toward his Masters. Bill Hillman of Manitoba, Canada teaches, he and his wife play professionally in nightspots around western Canada, and will soon have a record out. Chuck Schaden is in the public relations business and puts out a fine descriptive catalog. I talked on the phone to Don Koehnemann and Don Rasette. Don called from Illinois. He recently acquired 16 rather uncirculated Jack Benny programs which I will soon have. I talked in person to Bill Wesley in Washington, D.C. when I was there recently visiting my brother. Bill has a good collection of band programs.

The price of Shamrock tape went up around here. How about where you are? Keep the cards and letters coming, don't hang by your thumbs, and write if you get work.

NOTE: If anyone does not have these addresses here they are.
FOR BOOKS ON EARLY RADIO, MOVIES, ETC.

Nostalgia Book Club
525 Main St.
New Rochelle, NY 10801

FOR A VERY COMPREHENSIVE QUARTERLY ABOUT EARLY RADIO, PEOPLE TO TRADE WITH, NEWS ABOUT EARLY PERFORMERS.

Radio Historical Society of America
Box 100
Cloquet, Minn. 55720

Good listening
Jay

SUPPLEMENT 4

CORRECTIONS (PLEASE NOTE)

100 (Sup. 3) 1953	356 25 min.
505 Omit	361 25 min.
457 Very Sl. Squeal	419 25 min.
7 Rad Mike rec., hollow sound	374 Jack and Mary drive in the
159 and 5b the same	Maxwell and look into the future
156 25 min.	376 Very slight squeal
187 25 min.	337 Bank statement, quiz program -
211 25 min.	Smoke for Folks
215 25 min.	345 First song: Arabella
220 25 min.	351 First song: For Once in Your
221 20 min.	Life
250 25 min.	475 Meadowbrook Gardens, Cal.
252 25 min.	First song: Artistry in Percussion featuring Shelly Mann
	469 25 min.

243 Harriet gives
Adm

443 300
1st 1/2 only
Cluz kids
What class of people
still ride carriages
in Wash. & like it

7166 609
Record noise

734 no
cl.

396 The Crash

788 2nd interview

1-700 same

425 Also 1980s
Dec. to get material

Rewrite 1980s
2000s Schlant

607 Eagle Prog

577 Sl. hawk

8 Rec 80 mm

300 20 min

507 20 min

305 40 min

153 Also Unused Shots

428 25

459 20

716 bassy

403 25

468 sl hum

700

A machine with a third playback head is ideal for listening to the shows you are dubbing. I have often noted bad tape this way.

eye on the volume and tone control if you have one on the dubbing machine are essential. Some traders cut all programs on their own master tape. Then they dub them off. Also on the card you put in the box it might help to stamp your name so in case box and card get separated you know whom it belongs to.

MAILING WANTS: Keeping track of wants you send out is another tedious job but record keeping is essential if you don't want to duplicate orders. I jot down program ordered in another notebook alphabetically by first letter only with initials of person I'm ordering it from. I check it in the person's catalog. For programs with ~~plot~~ ^{plot} of titles (Suspense, Jack Benny) and others that I will order a lot of I note them on large sheets of paper with ~~plot~~ ^{much} of space allotted for each program. Even so I still duplicate programs once in a while. When sending wants it's good to put number, title, and reel number if it is listed. The time of the program is also helpful.

RECEIVING THE TAPE: Cross off programs on your list and in catalog of person from whom you are receiving the tape. I add information to the card if necessary at that point so I don't have to refer to the list again when listing the program.

507 **MAILING TAPE:** My first mailings were pretty insecure as I found out. Tape boxes can be used over and over again and I'm sure you all accumulate a supply. I attach each tape end to the reel so when you receive it the tape isn't all over the box. Scotch tape the box so it doesn't open and put your name on the outside of the box so if the container breaks there is still some record as to where to send it. Make sure stamps, mailing address, return address, 4th class marking is on the mailing package. Buying a stamp with your name and address can save a lot of time. I keep another notebook with the names of all my trading friends in alphabetical order by first letter only, address, and a record of all wants and tapes received and sent and the dates. This helps in case a tape gets lost and you have to tell the postman in tracing it when you sent it.

Use strong packaging tape to secure package

While most of this information isn't new perhaps something in it will help somebody. If you have a unique or more efficient way of doing something let me know and I will let others know.

MAKING A CATALOG. (6)

Partly because of the variety of catalogs being circulated and partly because of the requests of some of my readers, what follows is the editor's idea of what should be included in a catalog and how. This should be of special interest to new collectors but many experienced collectors might gain some new information.

1. Use 8½ by 11 paper. If printed on smaller paper try to have it open to 8½ by 11 so it can fit into a looseleaf notebook.

2. Listing the programs in alphabetical order is easier for the reader to find what he wants. Some traders prefer trading by the reel and list that way. When receiving programs write them down in a notebook alphabetically by first letter with essential information. When making a list or supplement you can use this alphabetical reference list and therefore keep your catalog in alphabetical order. If you list by reel and indicate tracks use the following: 1-1, 2-4, 1-3, 2-2. This is read

side 1-track 1, side 2-track 4, side 1-track 3, side 2-track 2. Some suggest, if listing by reel, putting down the sender of the reel so quality can be further judged if source is known.

3. If you know some programs are from disc or very few generations, list them separately or indicate them in some way (by an asterick is a good way). Have an introductory sheet explaining how to order, mechanics of trading, how to read unusual aspects of your catalog, quality, etc. *tape use*
✓ ORDER OF INFORMATION: 4. First use a code number of some kind in identifying the program. This is of use to the sender so he can find the requests easily enough. A chronological number, reel number, or identifying code is enough. If a code is used explain it in the introduction.

5. Next comes the series title in capital letters. Use the series title as indicated in the program on the tape. *my sh*

6. Next comes the program title, if any, guests, and the date if known and substantiated, ideally by a perpetual calendar. If there is no program title given, describe the program using the following methods:

Musical programs-first song

Quiz programs-first joke or contestant

Drama or comedy-opening segment, including names of people, as in GUNSMOKE and soap operas. In comedies, especially those such as the many edited JACK BENNY being circulated, include main idea of the program rather than opening minute or two. Skits performed should also be mentioned. For drama or comedy, main characters are essential to identifying the program.

If no date is given, give the day, time, and other clues that may be given by opening and closing announcements...Many collectors give a story summary even if the program title is given as in SUSPENSE and ESCAPE. This adds to a much better and more detailed listing.

7. Indicate the sponsor if given. Many collectors have a certain series or program but edited or AFRS and are looking for a sponsored one. Many collectors will not trade for certain programs unless this information is given.

8. The network should be listed if mentioned at the end of the program. Indicate if syndicated, AFRS, edited, BBC, records, TV, and movie soundtracks.

9. Indicate an accurate time. Don't call 26-minute programs 30-minute because 3 20-minute programs will fit on one track of a 1200-foot reel. Also, when dubbing, don't go from 1 track to another with the same program (unless exceptionally long). Splice a little tape to finish it. Also make sure your dubbing reel doesn't run short and the program is cut off before the end.

10. QUALITY: It is probably useless to have a standard rating system *rat* because all individuals differ on good, very good, excellent, etc. I personally suggest that specific problems be indicated. *for my sug* They should include edited, chopped up, or missing opening and/or closing (no op/cl). *pt 1* Listening problems include: muffled (muf), harsh or piercing, bassy (this differs from muffled in that it becomes cleared with more treble), dropouts (bits and pieces of sound missing-often due to faulty tape or patch cords), hum, severe hiss, volume fluctuation or level problem (vol fluct), fast, slow, scratchy or surface noise (scr, surf noise), background noise such as windy sounds, rumble, whistle or squeal (often due to faulty tape or patch cords), cross talk (x-talk), background talk (from poor erasure), interference, poor reception from home radio, home recorded, skips and repeats, buzz, wow in music, distorted (due to faulty tubes in recorder).

11. Separate and clarify items by punctuation (semi colons, quotation marks, spaces) and indentation.

12. If you have several programs from the same series, mention series once and indent for further programs...EXAMPLES FOLLOW:

5557 One Millionth Day 6/22/50, 5 Carson (A, CBS) 30 749
 3797 SUSPENSE: Sneak Preview; 3/23/44; J Cotten (Roma, CBS) 30 484
 3731 Sundown; J Kelk; no cl, slight vol fluct 20 428
 3663 JACK BENNY: 2/4/54; St Albans Hospital; F Allen, P Hoffa 30 467
 (L Strikes, CBS)

This is concise but gives essential information. The first number is the chronological listing, the last 2 are the time and the reel.

842 HOP HARRIGAN: Aired on August 17, 1943. With Hop held captive on an island, he swiftly moves to try an escape in his airplane. 15 minutes, in very good sound; from NBC Blue network; reel 67

This is wordy and same information could be written more concisely.

842 HOP HARRIGAN: 8/17/43; Hop, a prisoner on island, tries to escape in his plane (NBC-Blue) 15 67

Your style of writing will be up to you. Just make your listing the way you wish to see others. Comments on this article are welcome.

QUIZ: Answers to Octobers quiz; 1. Bob Crosby 2. Gangbusters 3. My Favorite Husband 4. Ozzie and Harriet 5. Billie Burke 6. Cream of Wheat 7a. Jack Kirkwood 7b. Clancy in MR KEEN 8. Joan Davis 9. Lucky Strike 10. Tamarest. Warren Sanford won first prize (3rd time) and Terry Black won second (first time). You are allowed to win 3 times in a 12-month period. A reel of programs to the winners. Keep the answers for November's quiz coming in.

DECEMBER QUIZ: 1. Who was Albert Mitchell 2. Polly Armstead, Windy Wales, and Tex Mason were in what series 3. Chester Gould created what comic strip, later a radio program 4. Name at least 5 characters played by Bill Thompson in FIBBER MCGEE 5. Hanley Stafford, Matt Crowley, Richard Kollmar, and Joseph Curtin all played what character. 6. Who lived at 4656 Collis Ave. 7. What cigarette emphasized the T-zone. 8. Who lived at 24 Orange Rd. 9a. What program had for its theme "Poet and Peasant Overture." 9b. What product had for its theme "Hands across the Table." 10. What was the name of the theme for GUNSMOKE and who wrote it?

TRADERS: As a public service, if you wish to have a list of traders I know about in your state, or in the larger states, in your area, just send a SASE...I heard from Luther Sies. They have undergone serious illness but things are much better and he hopes to be trading again very shortly...If anyone wishes to be put on an unavailable list (can't trade right now) let me know...As you know I am trying to act as a go-between for any discrepancies in trading. Does anyone have any information concerning Chet Sherkenas or Robert Vosburgh, whether they are trading or recently moved.

NETWORK RADIO: The following were received too late for the supplement mentioned earlier...CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT (9/30/40-12/15/49)...GENE AU* TREY; last show 5/13/56...MYSTERY IN THE AIR (Summer 1947) Camel, NBC, Thurs...2000 Plus; first show; 3/15/50...ARTHUR GODFREY TIME: first show 4/30/45...ROGER KILGORE (Summer 1948-10/12/48)...MURDER AND MR. MALONE (1946-48) Guild Wine, ABC, Sat, 9:30...COLUMBIA PRESENTS CORWIN (3/7/44-8/29/44)...STRANGE DR WEIRD (11/14/44-6/19/45) Mut, Tues, 7:15...FRANK MORGAN: 1937-40 was called GOOD NEWS...LIFE BEGINS AT 80 (summer, 1949) Mut...MEREDITH WILSON MUSICAL REVUE (summer, 1940) Johnson, NBC, Tues...NERO WOLFE: also (early 1946-12/15/46) Jergens, Mut, Sun...The O'Neills (1935-43) Ivory, NBC, 15m, 5t...THOSE WE LOVE (1938??)...Ray Stanich was responsible for many of the corrections and additions.

SUSPENSE: Does anyone have the dates for the following: Crowded Void, Classified Secred; P Baer, The Holdout; H Bartell, See How He Runs; J Backus, Sundown; J Kelk, Treasure Chest of Don Jose; R Burr, Death and